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STATE FOR NEA/PPD (BENZE); NEA/ELA (PISANI)

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SUBJECT: EMBASSY AMMAN COMMEMORATES SEPTEMBER 11

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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

¶1. (U) Post marked the fifth anniversary of the attacks of September 11 with a memorial ceremony at the Ambassador's residence, a DVC between NEA/PPD's Alberto Fernandez and a dozen leading Jordanian columnists, and the electronic distribution to 900 Embassy contacts of the August 2006 IIP e-journal "Rebuilding and Resilience Five Years After 9/11." The Ambassador's ceremony consisted of remarks by the Ambassador followed by a moment of silence. The senior leaders of Jordan's security and counter-terrorism efforts attended the event, including the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Jordanian Armed Forces, the Chief of Civil Defense, the Director of the Public Security Directorate, the commander of the Army's elite counter-terrorism unit, and the Acting Chief of Protocol of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Approximately 200 mission employees and family members also attended. In his remarks, the Ambassador noted; "Much more unites us as citizens of the world than divides us. No faith condones the deliberate targeting and killing of innocent civilians, and no cause or grievance - no matter how legitimate - can ever justify it." He also praised King Abdullah II's Amman Message for its emphasis on tolerance and understanding.

¶2. (U) Following the ceremony, PA held a digital video conference between NEA/PPD Director Alberto Fernandez and approximately a dozen leading Jordanian columnists. Fernandez began by reviewing the accomplishments of the Administration in the war on terror since September 11, 2001, stressing that the biggest success so far had been that no other attacks had occurred on U.S. soil. Fernandez also spoke about the President's recent initiative on detainees, and remarked that such a policy change was a sign of a great country, one that upheld the rule of law. In the subsequent question and answer session, Fernandez articulately addressed the issues of Afghanistan, Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian situation, Syria, and reform in the Middle East in the context of the war on terror. He made it clear that this struggle was not directed against Muslims in general, and that Muslims were the victims of terrorism as much, if not more, than any other people. At the conclusion of the hour-long dialogue, the Jordanian guests enthusiastically offered thanks for the chance to discuss U.S. policies in the region and the future of the anti-terrorism fight.

¶3. (U) Photos and short articles on the Ambassador's commemoration appeared in several leading Jordanian dailies September 12, re-printing embassy's press release on the event. Commentary on the substance of the DVC may run in the relevant papers over the next few days as the guests' columns appear.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: There remains a highly critical atmosphere in Jordan toward U.S. policies. The robust and senior-level turnout at both mission events reassures us that despite such criticism, official Jordanians, at least, still sympathize with the U.S. over September 11. Having been victims of recent attacks themselves,

they understand the importance of the war on terror and are proud of our partnership to defeat terrorism. End Comment.

Hale